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FM AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9658
INFO RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE
RUEHAA/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT 3961
RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ASTANA 0174
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 4576
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RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 0379
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 0454
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 4182
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 2463
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TAGS: [TBIO](#) [PGOV](#) [UZ](#)

SUBJECT: UZBEKISTAN: GOVERNMENT DENIES REPORTS OF SMALLPOX

Classified By: Poloff Steven Prohaska for reasons 1.4 (b, d).

¶1. (SBU) Uzbekistan's Ministry of Health has denied reports that two cases of hemorrhagic smallpox originating from Karakalpakstan have appeared in Tashkent. (Note: These claims have surfaced in the Russian press and the internet website www.centrasia.ru. End note.) Chief Public Health Officer and Deputy Health Minister Bakhtiyer Niyazmatov said that Vozrozhdenia Island in the Aral Sea is "under the control of the appropriate ministries and agencies... as far as we know, there are no smallpox agents left there."

¶2. (C) Given the Government of Uzbekistan's track record of denying both the occurrence of measles outbreaks in the country as well as recent instances of HIV transmission in Andijon hospitals, and Niyazmatov's habit of stonewalling against inquiries about such topics, we are not convinced that Uzbekistan would tell us even if there was a smallpox problem. This notwithstanding, our locally-employed staff member who monitors the news feels that the whole exchange has the look and feel of Russian provocation in response to cooling relations. At this point, we are not aware of any verifiable evidence of smallpox in Uzbekistan but are monitoring this closely, in conjunction with officials from CDC and other U.S. agencies with offices here.

NORLAND